

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 62/08/96

15 May 1996

Further information on UA 228/95 (EUR 62/24/95, 29 September 1995) and follow-up (EUR 62/29/95, 15 November) - "Disappearance"

UZBEKISTAN Abduvali MIRZOYEV (_____), Islamic preacher
Ramazan MATKARIMOV (_____)

There is still no news of the whereabouts of Abduvali Mirzoyev, an Islamic prayer leader, or his assistant, Ramazan Matkarimov, who "disappeared" on 29 August 1995 from the airport in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, reportedly after being detained by people believed to have been officers of the National Security Service (SNB).

Following urgent appeals sent during the last quarter of 1995, some members of the Urgent Action Network received replies from the Uzbek authorities which stated that "the allegations of involvement of the SNB in the disappearance of Abduvali Mirzoyev and Ramazan Matkarimov are without foundation". The replies go on to describe the investigations which the authorities say were carried out into the fate of the two men.

In their response the authorities also implied that Human Rights Watch (HRW), the US-based human rights organization, which visited Uzbekistan in November 1995, agreed with the official version of events. However HRW has since informed Amnesty International that this is not the case. Indeed, in an open letter to President Islam Karimov, dated 22 February 1996, HRW expressed "extreme disappointment and distress at a recent assessment you made in reference to the findings of our investigation... In that statement... you erroneously state that Human Rights Watch had concluded that 'the information we receive about human rights violations [in Uzbekistan] is untrue'... The statement is all the more upsetting because it is the latest in a series of public misrepresentations of our work by the Uzbek government."

In May 1996, HRW published "*Uzbekistan: Persistent human rights violations and prospects for improvement*" which describes the organization's belief that widespread state-sponsored human rights abuses continue in Uzbekistan, a view shared by Amnesty International. The report includes details of the case of Abduvali Mirzoyev and Ramazan Matkarimov and the official investigations into their "disappearance". It also tells of the alleged harassment and threats by police and security services against two brothers of Abduvali Mirzoyev who have been involved in trying to establish the whereabouts of the prayer leader.

In the replies to the UA Network, the Uzbek authorities reported that the investigation into the "disappearance" of the two men had concluded that, at Tashkent airport on 29 August 1995, Abduvali Mirzoyev and Ramazan Matkarimov "together with all the other passengers, went to the waiting area before boarding the plane, boarded the plane and took off for Moscow". The HRW report tells how, during HRW's November 1995 visit to Uzbekistan, the first deputy procurator "offered the implausible theory that these men had flown out of Uzbekistan but had not arrived in Moscow".

In September 1995, Amnesty International submitted an inquiry to the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances regarding the case of the two men. As far as the organization is aware, the Working Group has still not had any response from the Uzbek authorities.

Amnesty International members continue to work on this case, but no further action by the UA Network is requested. Thank you to all who sent appeals on behalf of Abduvali Mirzoyev and Ramazan Matkarimov.